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Diet Fads vs. Diet Truths

High-protein, low-carb, no-carb, no-sugar, weekend fasting, liquid-only: fad diets vary widely in name, but they all promote a quick way to lose some extra weight. A quick diet fix may sound appealing. Who doesn't want to shed a few pounds without having to exercise? However, diet fads are fads for a reason: typically they don't keep the weight off and are not a healthy way to lose weight. Read on to learn more about diet fads and how you can really lose the weight and keep it off.

High-protein Diets High-protein diets emphasize eating an increased amount of protein: much more than the USDA's recommended two to three servings per day. The basic theory is that the body works harder to digest protein, therefore it burns more calories. However, eating more protein can be hard on the kidneys. Dehydration is also a factor, as the body is trying continuously to excrete the elevated protein levels. People with kidney problems or a family history of diabetes should not attempt a high-protein diet unless instructed by a physician.

People who do partake in a high-protein diet may initially lose weight due to water loss; this is temporary, however, and the weight will come back. If you are on a high-protein diet, be sure to drink plenty of fluids to help digest your meals and keep hydrated.

No major health-care organization endorses a high-protein diet.

Low-carb Diets (Ketogenic Diets) Low-carb diets suggest severely restricting carbohydrate intake, typically substituting protein calories for the carbohydrate calories. This increase in protein often means a diet higher in fat; this higher fat content causes ketosis, a condition that can suppress hunger. The theory is that with a suppressed appetite, the dieter is less likely to eat as many calories.

The side effects associated with low-carb diets are numerous: besides an increase in the chances of heart disease (due to an increase in fatty protein), dieters are likely to feel tired from a lack of carbohydrates, and they risk developing kidney problems. Again, those with kidney problems or a history of diabetes should not try this type of diet.

No major health-care organization endorses a low-carb diet.

40/30/30 Diets This diet suggests maintaining a nutrient intake consisting of 40 percent carbohydrates, 30 percent protein and 30 percent fat. This supposedly will cause the aging process to slow down, resulting in better mental focus and a reduction of excess body fat.

Participants of 40/30/30 diets may experience weight loss, but it will occur mainly because of a loss of water and will be temporary. Anyone at risk for diabetes or kidney problems should avoid this diet.

No major health-care organization endorses a 40/30/30 diet.



Detoxifying Diets Detoxification diets recommend a substantial increased intake of fiber, sometimes combined with an increase of mono-unsaturated oils. Theoretically this will help to cleanse the system and make the dieter feel full, thus causing him or her to ingest less calories.

Unfortunately, eating too much fiber causes diarrhea, bloating and cramps, with the risk of dehydration. It does not guarantee weight loss, and the dieter will not experience any permanent weight loss.

No major health-care organization endorses detoxification diets; however, for a healthy body, the USDA recommends a diet rich in whole grains (six to 11 servings daily).

Fasting Diets A fasting diet calls for ingesting nothing but clear liquids, typically for a span of one to five days. The theory behind fasting is that toxins cause obesity; by ridding yourself of toxins, you will lose weight.

While fasting causes some weight loss, it is caused by a lack of caloric intake and will only be temporary. Additionally, the side effects can be dangerous: low energy, dizziness and weakness due to the lack of carbohydrate-based energy. People with a history of eating disorders or electrolyte imbalance should not fast, and if you are contemplating a fasting diet, be sure to do so only under medical supervision.

No major health-care organization endorses fasting diets.

Food-specific Diets We have all heard of the food-specific diet before: eat nothing but grapefruit/cabbage soup/protein shakes/etc. The idea is that by eating foods that purportedly have special properties to increase weight loss, you will lose weight.

The reality is that a food-specific diet lacks nutrition, leads to boredom and can be expensive. One food can't provide the variety of nutrients, vitamins and minerals that a human body needs to function properly. The chance of getting bored (and quitting) before you experience any weight loss is high. Additionally, if the specific food is a brand-name diet bar or shake, the costs can add up. Anyone with specific dietary needs should not attempt a food-specific diet unless ordered by a physician.

No major health-care organization endorses food-specific diets.

If you have other EAP concerns, please call the toll free number, **1-888-290-4EAP** or TDD access at 1-800-697-0353. This employee/family benefit is provided by your employer. "For information related to your everyday concerns, go to www.GuidanceResources.com. "First Time Users" will be prompted for their company ID: **FEDSOURCE**, to register and create your own username and password.